

Puerto Rican Cuisine



Puerto Rican cuisine is mildly reminiscent of its Spanish roots as well as Amerindian, and African influences. Puerto Rican food is quite distinct from Mexican cuisine. It is also distinct from the cuisine in the fifty United States.

The food is often well seasoned, but rarely very spicy. Beans and rice are common, and a favorite is *platanos fritos*, or fried plantains, similar to a banana but much less sweet and more firm. When fried they have an almost nutty taste.

Puerto Rico's national dish is called *Arroz con pollo* which is Spanish seasoned rice with chicken. Other tasty foods include *empanadas de carne o queso*, a meat or cheese pie usually called "empanadas" in other Spanish-speaking countries, and *mofongo* which is mashed green plantain seasoned with pork rind and garlic, often stuffed with meat or seafood.

"*El Jibarito*" ("The Little Mountain Man") is a popular dish. Typically served with Spanish rice, "*Jibaritos*" consist of your choice of meat along with mayo, cheese, lettuce, tomatoes and onions-all sandwiched between a fried plantain.

Holiday Food

During the holiday season Puerto Rican Cuisine shows its wide variety in taste and texture. It is during this season that most Puerto Ricans will enjoy parties and large family dinners almost daily. Starting with the Thanksgiving turkey which is stuffed with a ground beef and/or pork mixture containing such varied ingredients as almonds, raisins, olives, hard boiled eggs, tomatoes, garlic, etc. Rice is a mandatory course in dishes such as *Arroz con Gandules*, *Arroz con Tocino* (rice with bacon), *Arroz Mamposteao*, and the sweet dessert *Arroz con Dulce* (sweet rice).

Pork is central to Puerto Rican holiday cuisine. An old saying states that the only part of a pig that can not be used is the squeal. No holiday meal would be complete without several pork dishes. Among these are: *morcillas*, *pernil*, *tripe*, *jamon con piña* (ham and pineapple), and *chuletas ahumadas* (smoked cutlets).

Another dish that is ever present during the season is *pasteles* (cakes). These are made with a paste which can be made of green bananas, *yuca*, or *yautia*. This paste is then stuffed with either pork, ground beef, or chicken and then wrapped in a green banana leaf for added flavor. This is formed into a rectangle that is kept together with yarn. Finally, they are boiled and then are ready to be eaten. The making of *pasteles* is often a family activity in which many members of the family get together for hours or days to make dozens of *pasteles* to share with friends and loved ones.

Sweets are common in Puerto Rican cuisine and during the holidays the most popular are desserts such as *Arroz con Dulce* (sweet rice), *Budin de Pan* (bread pudding), *Barriguitas de Vieja* ("old

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bellies"), *Tembleque*, *Flan*, *Bizcocho de Ron* (rum cake), *Mantecaditos* (a sort of cookie), *Mampostiales*, *Dulce de Leche* (milk candy), *Pastelillos de Guayaba* (guava pastries), *Besitos de Coco* (coconut kisses), *Tarta de Guayaba* (guava tarts), and *Tortitas de Calabaza* (pumpkin tarts). A popular holiday beverage is *Coquito*, an eggnog-like drink made from coconut milk, sugar, eggs, rum, and spices. *Coquito* often includes Rum.

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Source: Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rican_Cuisine



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